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SERMON,

PREACHED

On *Friday, February* 27, 1778,

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR

A GENERAL FAST,

By BENJAMIN HUTCHINSON, Prebendary of *Lincoln*, and Vicar of *Kimbolton* in the County of *Huntingdon*.

I. PETER, ii. 3, 14.

Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be to the king, as ſupreme;
Or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

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Or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.

THE great deſign of public faſts or humiliation, in time of war or national calamity, is to make atonement for ſin, and to implore the protection of that Being, who holding the ſcale of empire in his hand, can raiſe the weak, and humble the mighty princes of the world. Who-

ever

ever takes it in this light, will readily own the neceſſity of approaching the temple of God, on ſuch occaſions, with purity and ſingleneſs of heart: to conſider maturely in time of war and danger where the juſtice of the diſpute ſeems to lie, whether on our ſide or on that of the enemy. An enquiry leſs than this may juſtify us in the eye of men, bias'd by party, or, what is more excuſable, by zeal for national glory; but leſs than this cannot acquit us in the ſight of Heaven.

When the cauſe of war is juſt, the entrance into it unavoidable, the ſucceſs of it not only probable but beneficial to the nation, and is undertaken by the concurrent voice of the people, a certain confidence will be added to our hopes, and fervency to our devotion: but if doubts ariſe in the breaſt of any man on theſe ſubjects, he will feel himſelf more or leſs

embarraſſed, as he is more or leſs clear of acting in conformity to his judgment. The founder of the Jewiſh religion has intermixed morality with politics; the author of the Chriſtian religion has manifeſtly taken a different method, and founded his doctrines ſimply on the minds and conſciences of men. Nor would it be at all proper for a miniſter to take notice of political matters in the exerciſe of his ſacerdotal office, if ſtates, when they became chriſtian, had not, in compliance with antient uſage, blended, in ſome meaſure, eccleſiaſtical duties with civil rights. Learned and good men have been divided in their opinions, whether religion has been benefited or not by the interference of the civil magiſtrate in affairs of public worſhip.

However intereſting an examination of this may be, it makes not now a part of our enquiry.

It

It is enough to obſerve from hiſtory, that the modes of public worſhip have been influenced by the Jewiſh and Pagan legiſlators; and from facts, that the ſtates of Chriſtendom follow their example: and, in conſequence of this power we are commanded, in the words of his Majeſty's proclamation this day, to aſſemble in all "churches and chapels of this "realm, to ſend up our prayers and ſup-"plications to God, for obtaining pardon "of our ſins, and for averting thoſe heavy "judgments, which our manifold provo-"cations have moſt juſtly deſerved; and "imploring his bleſſing and aſſiſtance on "the arms of his Majeſty by ſea and "land; and for reſtoring and perpetua-"ting peace, ſafety, and proſperity, to "himſelf and to his kingdoms." This being an order founded on law, it becomes neceſſary for us to comply, and to pay that attention to it, which the nature of the caſe requires.

That

That part of it which commands us to implore forgiveneſs of our ſins, and to ſupplicate mercy from heaven, can be objected to by no good chriſtian; that part which orders us to pray for reſtoring and perpetuating peace, ſafety, and proſperity to his majeſty and his kingdoms, can be objected to by no good ſubject. But the praying to a God of peace, for a ſucceſs in arms, no otherwiſe to be effected than by ſtaining them in the blood of our fellow-citizens, muſt ſtrike the mind of every thinking man with ſuch a degree of remorſe, as to make him ſtand perplexed between the duties of loyalty and humanity; and to lament the effect of thoſe raſh counſels, that have plunged this country into a war, which if not ended by negotiation and conceſſions on both ſides, is big with the moſt melancholy events of any ever undertaken by this ſtate! Three years conteſt has made it appear, that an expence ſu-

perior to that borne by the ſubject in our ſucceſsful wars againſt France and Spain, with the loſs of many a brave life, has brought us no nearer to the conqueſt of America than when the unhappy diſpute began.

Indeed if we at all conſider, it is not in the power of Britain to conquer America to any uſeful purpoſe, ſo as to raiſe a tribute from thence, the firſt object of the war. The great diſtance we are from them; the immenſe extent of their continent, the rapid increaſe of their people, the aid they will receive from foreign powers, ever ready to avail themſelves of the embarraſſments of neighbouring ſtates, of whoſe ſtrength and influence they are jealous, render the undertaking to the laſt degree improbable. Suppoſe the force of England ſhould overcome them in the field, and prevent them making head againſt

gainſt her with any conſiderable army; what then? Will our expences be leſſened? Every one, the leaſt ſkilled in military affairs or converſant in hiſtory, knows that force muſt be employed for a great number of years, to overawe and keep from inſurrection a nation ſubdued by force.

Whether the deſcendants of this country inhabiting the regions beyond the Atlantic can be defended or not in their oppoſition to us, is of no conſequence in the point of view in which we are now placing them, I mean with regard to the probability of conqueſt: it is ſufficient that they are ſtrongly animated with the ſpirit of oppoſition, founded as they ſuppoſe on liberty, to ſhew the difficulty that we muſt ſurmount before we can bring them under ſuch kind of ſubjection as to make them uſeful to us.

That the continuance of this ſtruggle for taxation may prove deſtructive to both is the buſineſs of both to conſider: but England may further reflect, that fighting with America by her ſide, ſhe is ſuperior to every power or kingdom of the world: ſevered from her, ſhe muſt wield the ſword alone, againſt two nations ſupported by their colonies: but in enmity with her, ſhe may have more to oppoſe, than the wiſdom of her councils, and the ſtrength of her arms, great as they each are, can withſtand. This being the ſtate of the caſe, I hope, I ſhall not be thought, in my public capacity, to thwart by this diſcourſe the true intereſt of the government under which I live, or be conceived deficient in reſpect to a ſovereign, whoſe perſon and family I eſteem, and whoſe virtues as a man I admire and reverence. And much leſs would I be conceived to hold

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an opinion (by wiſhing, as I heartily do, for a ceſſation of hoſtilities with our American bretheren) that oppoſition to the lawful authority of government may on any account be maintained. Upon the due exertion of good laws, and on men living in chearful obedience to them, the peace of ſocieties entirely depend: and whoever perſuades the breach of ſuch laws, or countenances thoſe who break them, cannot act in that caſe the part of a good citizen.

The lives, the property, the happineſs of men, being involved and exiſting in them, morality and reaſon would cry out againſt it: and though Chriſt himſelf iſſued no commands on this head, but, directing himſelf to the religious and not to the civil duties of men, left the laws in that reſpect exactly as he found them: yet an occaſion, and a very melancholy

lancholy one, ſoon preſented itſelf to his apoſtles after his death, to leave us their ſentiments on this matter.

'It is known that the Phariſees were 'not well affected to the civil magi- 'ſtrate, and by a miſrepreſentation of the 'words of Moſes, Deut. xvii, 15. made 'a conſcience of not paying tribute to 'the Roman emperor, and acknowledg- 'ing him for their ſovereign; The words 'are, "Thou ſhalt in any wiſe ſet him "king over thee whom the lord thy "God ſhall chuſe: one from among thy "brethren ſhalt thou ſet king over "thee: thou mayeſt not ſet a ſtranger "over thee, which is not thy brother." 'Add to this, that the Jews entertained 'hopes of a temporal kingdom of the 'Meſſiah, which was to deliver them 'from the dominion of the Romans, and 'which they expected about this very

'time.

'time. Hence even thoſe Jews who
'did not acknowledge Jeſus to be the
'Meſſiah, were yet excited by his hope
'to tumult and inſurrection. There had
'been diſturbances of this kind even
'among the Jews at Rome, which had
'occaſioned their baniſhment from thence.

'But chriſtians did not reſiſt the Ro-
'man magiſtrate, nor expect a temporal
'kingdom of the Meſſiah, and were be-
'ſides at that time, about the year of
'Chriſt fifty two or fifty three, ſo feeble
'at Rome, that they could not ſet on
'foot any tumults. I apprehend *Judæi*,
'made uſe of by the Roman writer means
'real Jews. Theſe raiſed more than one
'of thoſe violent commotions at Rome,
'which in Latin were called *tumultus*,
'a word which ſignifies more than war:
'for it expreſſes war in the neighbour-
'hood of Rome. They did this in

'hopes that Chriſt would ſoon come and
'deliver them from the Romans; and
'they boaſted of this expectation. The
'emperor and his miniſters interpreted
'this, as if Chriſt were a certain per-
'ſon, reſident elſwhere, who ſpirited up
'the Jews to inſurrection.* The city
'of Rome was at this time the ſeat of
'tumults and civil wars, and was involved
'ved in troubles even when the provin-
'ces were in peace. The ſenate was
'ſecretly jealous of the emperor, and the
'emperor ſuſpected the ſenate. The em-
'peror was perpetually expoſed to con-
'ſpiracies. Caligula died a violent death;
'Claudius was poiſoned; and Nero, who
'was then on the throne, ended his days

* *Chreſto impulſore tumultuari.*

The words of Suetonius, Lib. 5. are, *Judæos impulſore Chreſto aſſidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit.*

The author ſuppoſes *Chriſtus* derived from the Greek χρηστος.

'as

'as unnaturally as they. The inferior 'magiſtrates aſpired to the empire. The 'imperial life-guard, who being foreign-'ers, and chiefly Germans, had no ſhare 'in the proſperity of the common-wealth, 'were, after the reign of Claudius, bought 'by the emperors with money, and 'were odious to the citizens. And, in 'fact, the emperors had no better right to 'their ſovereignty over the Romans than 'that which they derived from the ſword, 'or from the depth of their cunning.'*

This hiſtorical account is abſolutely neceſſary to explain the meaning of Saint Paul's thirteenth chapter to the Romans, that is, to the Chriſtians reſiding at Rome. And Saint Peter has the ſame reaſoning in view in his general epiſtle to the Jewiſh Chriſtians diſperſed abroad throughout th Roman provinces. As

* Michaelis Lect. Sect. 131.

they

they were ſtrangers, men not reſiding in their own country, but gueſts and viſitors only; he ſhews that it was moſt abſurd in them to imbroil themſelves in thoſe diſputes, which at that time diſtracted Rome, and brought an odium on their name, and at laſt deſtruction on their country. This is the true ſenſe and expoſition of Saint Peter's language and advice. "Dearly beloved, I beſeech "you, as *ſtrangers* and *pilgrims*, abſtain "from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the "ſoul. Having your converſation honeſt "among the Gentiles: that whereas they "ſpeak againſt you as evil doers, they "may by your good works, which they "ſhall behold, glorify God in the day "of viſitation.

"On this account do not take part in "the diſturbances that are going on in the "country in which you happen as ſtrangers

"to

" to reſide; but ſubmit yourſelves to " their civil government for the Lord's " ſake, whether it be to the emperor as " ſupreme, or unto governors, as unto " them that are ſent by him for the " puniſhment of evil doers and for the " praiſe of them that do well."

I have placed theſe words at the head of this diſcourſe to take an occaſion of ſhewing them in their true light, becauſe I have heard, ſince the commencement of our unhappy and raſh diſpute with our colonies, arguments made uſe of ſimilar to thoſe, that divided this country in the days of the firſt unfortunate family of the houſe of Stuart, when advocates for the crown held up the veiled myſteries of ſtate, and the divine hereditary right of kings, and non-reſiſtance; and the advocates of the people advanced principles that tended to the ſubverſion

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of the lawful authority of our admired conſtitution. We are not now to learn what government can or cannot do.* The ſupreme authority of all monarchies, at leaſt of ours, is the laws; the laws of this monarchy have been ably formed, they are written in the wiſdom of our anceſtors, and ſealed with their blood. To theſe ordinances of man we are to ſubmit for the Lord's ſake; and, by fair and obvious deduction, we are to reverence and obey that conſecrated perſon, who is the executor of thoſe laws; and to reverence magiſtrates appointed by

* "The ſupreme power cannot take from any "man any part of his property without his own "conſent. For the preſervation of property being "the end of government, and that for which men "enter into ſociety, it neceſſarily ſuppoſes and re-"quires, that the people ſhould have property, with-"out which they muſt be ſuppoſed to loſe that, "by entering into ſociety, which was the end for "which they entered into it, too groſs an abſur-"dity for any man to own. LOCKE on civil go-vernment, Article 138.

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him, who cannot act beyond the authority the laws give, but at their own riſque and peril.

Now the matter in diſpute with our American colonies (if I may yet call them ours) was not, at the beginning, *whether* they ſhould obey the *laws* but *what laws* they ſhould obey. Not whether they ought to be ſubject to the parent ſtate; but how far that ſubjection ought, by the ſpirit of the conſtitution, to be claimed.

To make no diſtinction between *this* and the rebellion which ſome thirty years ago imbroiled this country, is to give up all pretenſions we ourſelves have of liberty; to wave the glorious rights of the Revolution, and to call in queſtion the happineſs we have enjoyed from the acceſſion of that mild and illuſtrious houſe now ſet over us. This is what we

ſhould

ſhould have maturely conſidered, to have left no fair pretence of quarrel to the colonies; inſtead of which, two propoſitions have been laid down, the plentiful ſource of our preſent, and impending miſfortunes: the one that America was not unanimous: the other, allowing her to be ſo, that an handful of Britiſh troops will march unimpeded from one end of her continent to the other. Experience makes it unneceſſary now to combat poſitions neither founded on probability or on the nature of things. That a few merchants, inhabiting one town, affected in their property by a few pence, ſhould from that circumſtance alone, be able to raiſe into rebellion and plunge into all the miſeries of war thirteen diſtinct nations, diſtinctly governed: that children who ſucked the breaſt of liberty ſhould not imbibe their parent's virtue, becauſe tranſplanted into a more laborious ſoil, are

arguments

arguments too abſurd for diſputation. That England, famed for wiſdom, ſhould have thus erred, would not gain the credit of poſterity, were they not told that ſhe became herſelf, and owned her error. May the faithful page of her hiſtorian tell them, that her confeſſion was not made too late; that no watchful enemy when thus bewildered had ſeized the fatal opportunity, and clipt the thread of extrication: that her petitions at the throne of Grace have been received, and Heaven had lent an ear to her entreaties.

Our meaſures are confeſſed to have been unſucceſsful; that is, to have been badly laid, by thoſe who formed them: for one half of the nation told the other that this would be the iſſue of their plans before they were put into execution. May neither the obſtinacy of party, the private intereſt of men, nor the vi-

ces of individuals ſo prevail, as to render us unworthy the protection of Heaven, which ſeems alone able to relieve us from thoſe impending dangers, that ſo loudly threaten this once glorious empire.

FINIS.